

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RETIREMENT SECURITY ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1173) to repeal the CLASS programs:

Ms. RICHARDSON. Madam Chair, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1173, a bill that would repeal the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports program (CLASS). Instead of repealing the CLASS Act and leaving millions of Americans in need of long-term care with the status quo, Congress should be working together to improve the program.

Madam Chair, the CLASS program was designed to provide Americans with a voluntary long-term care insurance program that would make long-term care more affordable and accessible. Statistics show that there are currently over 10 million Americans in need of long-term care; by 2020, that number is expected to grow to 15 million. We have an obligation to ensure that those in need of long-term care have affordable options available to them.

The United States is facing a long-term care crisis. With the Nation's baby boomers nearing retirement, we can expect to see the number of seniors in need of long-term continue to rise in the coming years. Due to the high costs of obtaining long-term support services, it is estimated that there are 52 million unpaid caregivers—mostly relatives of those in need—providing long-term care in the home.

In my district, there are over 115,000 seniors and 12,557 residents collecting Social Security disability insurance—most of whom will most likely need long-term care services at some point in their lifetime. In addition, there are 85,444 of my constituents who are nearing retirement age and would benefit from the peace of mind of having insurance coverage for long-term care.

Each year, families pay more than \$50 billion out-of-pocket to provide long-term support services to loved ones. Many of these families are already hard-pressed financially, but do not have any other options available to them. Working to fix the CLASS program will provide working adults a national, voluntary, and premium-financed insurance program for the purchase of long-term care services and supports. Instead of working to fix the CLASS Act, the Republican majority is trying to repeal this important program in its entirety.

Madam Chair, it is estimated that about 70 percent of people over 65 will require long-term care services at some point during their lifetime. Medicare covers only minimal long-term care services such as short-term skilled nursing care and limited home health services.

Medicaid now accounts for nearly 50 percent of all long-term care spending nationwide.

Unfortunately, Americans wishing to utilize Medicaid for long-term care services must impoverish themselves in order to qualify. In many cases, families are left with no choice but Medicaid after they are forced to spend down their income and assets to pay for costly long-term care services.

Insurance policies in the private market which cover long-term care services are often too expensive for most Americans, and currently pay for only about 7 percent of spending on long-term care. Approximately only nine percent of Americans aged 50 or older have private insurance policies that cover long-term care services. The CLASS Act seeks to address the lack of available coverage by making long-term care services more accessible and affordable for working families.

The CLASS Act provides a framework with which to build a viable long-term care program. Repealing this much needed program brings us back to square one in our effort to provide working families with a national insurance program that enables them to plan for their long-term care needs.

Madam Chair, this is just another GOP attempt to dismantle the Affordable Care Act one piece at a time. The American people deserve better and Congress needs to work together to ensure that Americans of all income levels have access to long-term care services in the event that they become necessary.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues to vote against passage of this misguided legislation that simply ignores the need to address our Nation's long-term care crisis.

AMBASSADOR SULEYMANOV OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

HON. DAN BOREN

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 6, 2012

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and welcome to Washington, DC Ambassador Elin Suleymanov of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On January 18 Ambassador Suleymanov presented his credentials to President Obama.

Ambassador Suleymanov has a distinguished diplomatic career. Prior to his appointment as Ambassador, Mr. Suleymanov served as Azerbaijan's first Consul General in Los Angeles.

While Azerbaijan has a new Ambassador to the United States, I bring to my colleague's attention that once again Azerbaijan lacks an Ambassador from the United States. After over a year of vacancy, President Obama nominated Matthew Bryza as Ambassador. After a stalled confirmation process President Obama appointed Matthew Bryza to the position in 2010. Unfortunately he was not given the opportunity for a confirmation vote in the Senate and has recently returned to the U.S.

Azerbaijan is a key strategic partner to the U.S. by providing an important transportation

route for supplies to our troops in Afghanistan and transit of Caspian oil and gas to the Mediterranean via the BTC pipeline. The relationship between the U.S. and Azerbaijan is too important not to have an Ambassador in place. As one of our few predominantly Muslim allies we must do what is right.

I encourage my colleagues to urge the Administration to nominate a new Ambassador to Azerbaijan and ask the Senate to act in the best interest of our national security and have an expeditious confirmation vote.

A TRIBUTE TO NIALL O'SHEA AND THE UNI-CAPITOL WASHINGTON INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 6, 2012

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, for decades the United States has worked closely with Australia on issues of great importance to our two nations. Australia has stood out among the international community as a friend of the United States and remains one of our closest allies today. Thirteen years ago, a program was launched to place Australian students in offices in our Nation's Capital. Since that time, the Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Program has delivered to the United States some of Australia's best and brightest to serve as interns in a variety of federal agencies, congressional offices and committees.

When the opportunity arose again to participate in the Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Program, I immediately agreed to welcome another Australian "ambassador." This is my third time hosting an intern from the program, and once again my office and I have been pleased with the positive contributions of Niall O'Shea, who was placed in our office. He has attended meetings and briefings, assisted my staff with various research initiatives, and helped serve my constituents of the Second District of Connecticut. His impeccable and clipped Australian accent is a real treat for visitors and callers from Connecticut whom he has interacted with. Niall's participation in this program has provided him with new opportunities and experiences that only the Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Program could provide. While in the program Niall has attended events at the Australian Embassy and listened to speakers from the State Department. A well-rounded college student, Niall will be receiving a dual Bachelor degree in law and art when he graduates from the University of Western Australia.

Many of my colleagues have also been privileged to welcome students like Niall to their offices. This year, 12 students from all across Australia are serving in offices in Washington, helping foster a new generation of understanding and shared experiences between our two nations. Launched by former Congressional staffer Eric Federer, The Uni-Capitol

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

Washington Internship program has now delivered 130 Australian student interns over the past 13 years.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all of my colleagues to open their doors to students from around the world so that they can share in our great democracy. Similarly, I would encourage American university students to seek established and creative ways to connect with their counterparts around the globe. I ask my colleagues to join with me in recognizing the contributions of the Uni-Capitol Internship Program and to once more thank Niall O'Shea for his dedication and hard work.

HONORING JOSH UNDERWOOD

HON. ROBERT B. ADERHOLT

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 6, 2012

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to honor Mr. Josh Underwood, one of the twelve interns from the Uni-Capitol Washington Program, UCWIP who is currently interning in my office. The Uni-Capitol Washington Program has paired some of the brightest Australian students with various congressional offices for more than a decade and I am happy to have been a host.

Josh comes from University of Queensland and is studying law and philosophy. Over the past month, I have found him to be outstanding in his duties and going above and beyond our expectations. When complimenting Josh to Mr. Federer, the director agreed saying "Josh has been a standout among standouts in everything I've organized" and I agree wholeheartedly. He has attended committee hearings, drafted constituent correspondence, and assisted me as well as my staff with research. His Australian accent has garnered the attention of many of my constituents on tours and over the phone. Josh's commitment, hard work, and presence have been an asset to the office and he will be sorely missed by all.

The program has been in force for 13 years thanks to the vision of Eric Federer, its director and founder. The students who are selected come from a variety of academic disciplines, but all have a common interest: promoting the U.S.-Australia relationship. These student placements are enhanced by the formation of genuine friendships and the exchange of views and ideas between the Australian interns and their respective offices. We are grateful for these friendships and it is our hope that they strengthen the diplomatic ties of our great countries.

I would thank Eric Federer for the opportunity to host Josh over the past several weeks. To date, 130 interns have come through his program representing 8 different universities over the programs lifetime. It enhances opportunities for the individuals who come and enlighten those who they come to. After the internship, many receive jobs on the Hill or go to work with Federal or various State Parliaments in Australia. Other interns have gone onto work in the Australian Embassy or The World Bank. Simply put, this program selects incredibly talented individuals that are a pleasure to host and work with. It was an honor to have Josh in our office and would wish him the very best, but I sincerely doubt

he needs it. Josh, thank you again for your hard work and dedication.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 658,
FAA REAUTHORIZATION AND RE-
FORM ACT OF 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. LAURA RICHARDSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 3, 2012

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the Conference Report for H.R. 658, the FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act. I want to thank Chairman MICA, Ranking Member RAHALL, the other conferees, and the leadership for finally bringing an FAA Reauthorization bill to the floor.

Nearly five years has passed since the last FAA Reauthorization Act passed by the Congress and signed into law by the President expired. Instead of passing a new clean reauthorization bill five years ago, the reauthorization process was subverted by the desire of some members across the aisle to hijack the FAA reauthorization process as a to advance narrow ideological interests. This politicization of what had previously been a nonpartisan approach to developing aviation legislation was a great disservice to our nation, particularly in the economically challenged conditions of the past several years.

Every day thousands of men and women give their best to ensure that the American civil aviation industry remains the best in the world. And no group of persons suffered more from Congress' failure to pass a short-term clean FAA extension last August than the airline pilots, air traffic controllers, flight attendants, baggage handlers, mechanics, technicians, customer service representatives, security personnel, and others whose livelihood depends upon a functioning civil aviation sector.

This past August, House Republican leadership, giving in to the demands of its extremist Tea Party faction and ignoring the long-standing Congressional tradition of passing clean extensions of the FAA reauthorization bill, broke precedent and attached to the bill several controversial ideologically extreme policy riders to weaken unions and kill jobs, knowing full well it would never be approved by the Senate. Then it adjourned and left town for the August recess.

This abdication of responsibility resulted in the furlough of more than 4,000 FAA non-partisan career civil servants who in many cases had spent more than two decades working to provide the public with safe, modern and efficient air travel. This Republican-initiated FAA shutdown resulted in work stoppages on 217 construction projects worth more \$11 billion that had been undertaken to upgrade the nation's air traffic control and safety infrastructure.

This House majority's irresponsible action' more than 86,000 construction jobs at risks around the country and unconscionably jeopardized the ability of nearly 90,000 household to pay their rent or mortgages, educate their children, and put food on the table.

In addition to the havoc wreaked on the families of the employees involved, the Republicans' forced shutdown of the FAA cost

the American taxpayer \$300 million in lost airport fees. To make matters worse, instead of passing the savings resulting from the lapsed airline ticket tax on to air travelers, almost every one of the airlines raised their ticket prices and pocketed the money.

By any measure the House Republicans political gambit was a colossal blunder and the resulting public backlash led the chastened majority to drop the odious anti-labor provisions and pass a clean FAA extension thereby providing time for the parties to reconcile their differences and reach agreement on the long-term reauthorization measure before us today.

Turning to the merits of the bill before us, there is much in it that I approve and support.

First, the conference report maintains funding at current levels, authorizing a \$63.4 billion investment in our Nation's aviation system for fiscal years, FY, 2012–15. Of this amount, approximately \$13.4 billion is allocated for the Airport Improvement Program, AIP, \$38.3 billion for FAA Operations, \$672 million for Research, Engineering & Development, and \$10.9 billion for FAA's Facilities & Equipment.

Second, the bill provides about \$1 billion in funding authority for FAA's Next Generation, NextGen, air traffic modernization program, approximately the same as the past two years. When fully implemented, NextGen will complete the transformation of an antiquated air traffic control system based on World War II-era technology to one based on 21st Century GPS technology. Additionally, the bill accelerates the development of a NextGen satellite-based navigation system to provide pilots with more accurate information to track aircraft and weather. And to strengthen accountability for the progress on the NextGen program, the Conference Report sets a schedule for FAA and creates the new position of Chief NextGen Officer to oversee the effort.

Third, stripped from the Conference Report is the controversial House Republican provision that would have increased the percentage of employees who must vote in favor of a union before the National Mediation Board could certify the union as their representative. Had this provision not been dropped, it would have unfairly tilted the playing field against employees because a union could be certified only if it won the votes of a majority of all employees in a particular group, not just those who actually voted. It is clearly unfair to consider a vote not cast as a vote against. To put it another way: there is a gigantic difference between not voting and voting No! I am pleased that this anti-democratic provision has been dropped from the bill.

Fourth, the bill establishes a process for mediation and binding arbitration of impasses between the FAA and the collective-bargaining representatives of employees to help ensure that disputes are resolved fairly and efficiently without any disruption to the aviation system.

Fifth, the bill requires the FAA and OSHA to move forward with long-stalled rules to extend OSHA protections to flight attendants.

Sixth, the bill will help relieve congestion at many of the nation's interior hub airports by authorizing eight new round-trip flights between Reagan National Airport and airports located more than 1,250 miles away.

Finally, I am also pleased that H.R. 658 includes protections for passengers. For example, air travelers have greater assurance they will be treated fairly while traveling. Tarmac delays are something we have all experienced